



STATE OF WASHINGTON

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
P.O. Box 45010, Olympia, Washington 98504-5010**

May 27, 2008

Richard Klarberg
President and CEO
Council On Accreditation
120 Wall Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10005

Dear Mr. Klarberg,

Thank you for your May 16 letter outlining the Council on Accreditation's (COA) conditions for Children's Administration to continue the accreditation process through your organization.

It's important that you and your staff know that Children's Administration has benefited from the COA process and that we have accomplished much of what we set out to do six years ago. The underlying values and principles of COA standards have become part of our daily work. I am pleased that you recognized the progress we have made and our workers' exceptional efforts.

As you know, we have successfully pursued and passed the various steps of accreditation at 43 of 46 field offices and headquarters. The remaining three offices had completed site visits and were waiting for the COA response as part of the extensive review process.

As valuable as the process has been, however, we cannot commit to the terms and timelines of the conditions you laid out in your May 16 letter. As a public agency, to do so would require additional legislative authorization. Please understand that for us accreditation has never been an end in itself, but rather a means of improving Washington's child welfare system, and we must weigh the goal of formal accreditation in light of other major initiatives under way.

When Children's Administration first committed to pursuing accreditation in 2002, it was one of the few available strategies that provided outside review of our practice. But in the last six years the federal government has established periodic reviews of each state's child welfare performance. The first review was in 2004 and we are already preparing for a second federal performance review set to begin in 2010.

We must also continue to invest our resources and energy in improving outcomes for foster children and their families, as driven by other policy directions established by the Governor and Legislature and commitments made by the state in the Braam court case.

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The tremendous support we have received from Governor Gregoire and the Legislature in the form of additional staff and service resources will allow us to continue our focus on these high-priority areas including monthly visits and caseload and workload reduction. While we turn our full attention to these areas, we are choosing to hold off on further pursuit of accreditation. As we complete work on the legislative and court ordered improvements, we may again approach COA in the future.

Please express my thanks to the COA Peer Reviewers who visited the field offices and offered valuable input and validation of the hard work staff did to prepare for the site visits. Please give my thanks also to the COA staff and commissioners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl Stephani". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cheryl" being more prominent than the last name "Stephani".

Cheryl Stephani, Assistant Secretary
Children's Administration

cc: Christine O. Gregoire, Governor
Robin Arnold-Williams, Secretary, Department of Social and Health Services
Steve Hassett, Senior Counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Timothy Hunter, Accreditation Program Manager, Children's Administration